
JOURNAL OF THE
BARBER COIN COLLECTORS' SOCIETY

Volume 11, #1

Spring



2000

Die Break by Barber's Initial



1892 HALF DOLLAR

*Courtesy NGC Photo Proof Staff
Thanks David Lange, Director of Research*

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JOURNAL OF THE
BARBER COIN COLLECTORS' SOCIETY

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BCCS PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the first BCCS issue of the new millennium!

Our Society continues to fare well both financially and in the continued timely appearance of the *JOURNAL*. Barber coins are a highly collectable series, sometimes surprisingly so. I do not find large or long date runs listed in current major auctions. Nor do I note any dealer with any concentration of tough dates in higher grade. This observation, if valid, indicates these coins are not generally available and those who hold such material (primarily the collector) value them more than current market worth. It was most revealing to read the following remark in the March 10th issue of *the COIN DEALER newsletter* under The Market in Depth section:

For example, Barber Dimes, Quarters and Half Dollars are needed in all circulated grades. Many collectors are working on sets of Barber coins, and specific dates are in short supply. Savvy collectors are of the journal looking to buy problem-free key and semi-key dates in all circulated and uncirculated grades.

It is interesting to study the past in the sense of learning from history. I've just completed reading and highlighting the contents of the 400 auction sales conducted by the New York firm Stack's. This covers a time period from 1935 to 1989, I own all but five sales from this era. In a future issue of the *Journal* you will find the cover of one early sale and a listing of Barber 25¢ lots. My overall experience from this review confirms choice or rare coins from these series have never been widely offered. When a block of high-grade specimens were available or a complete denomination set offered, the sale highlighted such material.

This seems to be a good time to mention the annual American Numismatic Association (ANA) convention. This year's location is Philadelphia, a rather central east coast location in a moderate size city. Aside from numismatics, Philadelphia has few rivals for colonial landmarks, something of interest to the non-numismatically inclined (e.g., spouse and children). Details will be forthcoming in the *Numismatist* or send me a note and I'll assist. The all-important BCCS meeting is held on Saturday, August 12th.

I need member feedback on a communication thought. When Paul Reuter issues renewal notices late this year, I wish to have members provide a phone number and Email address, voluntarily. Does anyone have pro- or con- views on this? Please contact Russell or me. My objective here is simply one of better and faster communication with members.

Numismatic regards,
Phil Carrigan



FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the Spring *Journal*! I'm beginning my fourth year as editor for the *Journal*, and it's hard to believe how fast the time fly's by. The Barber coin market is very strong, given the demand for, and the limited supply of, many coins. Expect this trend to continue! Don't pass a chance to purchase a choice coin you need for your collection, it will only be harder to locate in the future.

Paul Reuter tells me we've added ten new members from January, 1st to date. However, a number of members are yet to renew their membership. If there is a DUES NOTICE in your journal, please send your dues (\$15.00) Today! You're a valued member of our society, so please continue to support our *Journal*!

As of today, the Vermont quarter designs are not finished, so I don't know where my design idea is in the running. The first concepts the arts committee worked-up were unacceptable. The mountain was dropped from all of the designs submitted to the committee, which is hard to believe, considering Vermont is the "Green Mountain State."

The results are in for the 1999 BCCS Literary Contest which are announced in this *Journal*. Thank you for all your efforts submitting articles. I can't put the *Journal* together without your continued support, so please take the time to submit something. Photos are also a great help, as are letters to the editor. Your fresh idea's, comments, and suggestions can help your editor make the *Journal* even more enjoyable.

Enjoy collecting,
Russell Easterbrooks

THE JOURNAL NEEDS YOUR ARTICLES!

Remember your articles submissions automatically enter you in the BCCS Literary Contest. The article receiving the most member votes will win a 1st place prize of \$50, second prize will be \$25, and third place will be a free BCCS one year membership. So, make sure your membership is up to date, and get your article in the mail to Russell at the address on page one.

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS JUNE 30

Editor of the BCCS *Journal*,

I would like to invite all members of the BCCS to exhibit at the national coin convention in Philadelphia this year. The convention dates are Aug. 9-13, 2000. You must be a member of the American Numismatic Association in order to exhibit. If you need the exhibit application, contact the ANA Convention Department at 719-632-2646 or I will be glad to send you one. Your exhibit is needed to make ANA Philadelphia, 2000 the best ever.

Thank You,
Gerald Kochel, BCCS # 20
Exhibit Chairman
P.O. Box 215
Lititz, Pa. 17543

Mr. Easterbrooks,

I want to thank you for your efforts on the *Journal*. To help you out with the next issue, here is a letter to the editor. On February 26th I attended the show put on by the Tazewell Numismatic Society in Pekin, Illinois. I usually walk the floor in search for deals and sometimes purchase a nicer circulated Barber coin for my collection.

This time I saw a fellow collector going through some loose circulated Barber halves. He had probably picked all the good ones, but I decided to look them over anyway. I was happy to find that he had left behind three 1913-S. One was AG and 2 were G, with only minor problems. They were overall nice for the grades. If memory serves there was a fourth with problems. The price was \$4.50 each! I know that trends puts them at \$6.50 in G, but look at the mintage, 604,000! This is not a bad deal in my view. I would encourage collectors to spend sometime looking through these circulated coins as you never know what you may find.

Happy collecting
Randall Doty
BCCS # 610

Winners for the 1999 BCCS Literary Contest

1st place, Russell Easterbrooks, article - *The Survival Rate of Barber Coins in Circulation*

2nd place, James Ryder, article - *Thoughts on Collecting Barber Halves*

3rd place, Michael Fey, article - *A New 1901 O/Horizontal O Barber Dime*

Congratulations to our winners!

Special thanks to all who contributed articles during the past year. I simply can not put the *Journal* together without your help. The winners will be notified of their prize's.

Editors Note; I would like to thank all the members who voted for my article. In fact the response was overwhelming! I most certainly will have to do a follow-up article on this topic. It was an honor to win our Society's first literary award in 1991. This year's award is extra special, because it proves my efforts are still enjoyed by the membership eight years later! I have decided to donate my 1st place prize, back to the Society in hope that someone else will submit the 1st place article next year! So get busy, and send in your article.



Multiple Clashmarks
Courtesy NGC Photo Proof Staff
David Lange, Director of Research

Stalking a Barber Rarity

.....

In Dave Lawrence's *The Complete Guide to Barber Halves*, this numismatic piece has been assigned a rarity rating of R7, defined as "rare; only a few exist." That rating is reserved not only for the lower grade specimens from About Good through Very Good, but for the surviving Mint State pieces as well. However, in the mid-grades of Fine through Extra Fine, the top of the rarity scale is reached with R8, defined as "unique or almost so." To Barber Half collectors everywhere, these ratings can only be applied to one piece in the entire series: the truly rare 1892-O, Micro O.

Many Barber enthusiasts dream of owning an example of this variety, but due to its extreme scarcity, only a few dozen at best ever will at any given point in time. With somewhere between 15 and 25 pieces now believed to have survived the pitfalls and melting pots of the last 108 years, the "Micro O" lends a special meaning to the word "rarity" for Barber Half collectors everywhere. After all, in the entire Barber universe, only the storied 1913 Liberty Nickel and the ultra-rare 1894-S Barber Dime outrank it, along with perhaps the lesser-known 1909-O/Inverted D Barber Dime and the controversial 1899/8 Liberty Nickel.

Few people know Barbers like Dave Lawrence. In 1991, when his Barber Half volume was first released, Dave offered this evaluation under the "Rarity Rating" of the Micro O:

"Extremely scarce in all grades, but some may still be discovered. Larry Briggs helped with the following estimate of actual coins which have turned up to date: 1 AG; 1 G/VG; 1 VG cleaned; 1 VG?F with old obverse scratch; 1 lightly cleaned and retoned (Dave failed to provide the grade, if known); 4-5 mint state (all semi-prooflike). One of the latter graded MS61 by ANACS."

Further on, under "Comments", Dave adds:

"The micro-O is a cherry pickers dream coin.⁴ It seems likely that there are still a few to be found."

Not surprisingly, several new pieces have surfaced since Dave's initial 1991 inventory. As a good example, I personally acquired a PCGS F12 example from Dave Lawrence in September of 1997. At the time, Dave personally stated to me that it was the only piece graded Fine he was aware of! Since that time, I've often wondered at the actual population of Micro Os, since evidence of new discoveries does leak out periodically.

It's January, 2000. With the Winter issue of our *Journal* in hand, I read with great interest on page 16 an article by Steve Szczerbiak, in which he reported seeing a "Fine or better" Micro O at the BCCS meeting he attended at last year's

Continued on next page

Barber Rarity

Continued from page 6

Chicago ANA. My pulse quickened. "Aha," I thought, "there's another one, and another Fine at that!" And as if that one sighting wasn't enough, back on page 11, Russ Easterbrooks reported being approached by an older gentleman at a Vermont show who wanted an opinion on a G/AG Barber Half that turned out to be — you guessed it — a Micro O.

For me, this was the call to action. After trading e-mails with BCCS member Steve Sczerbiak, we agreed it would be a great idea to try to nail down a year 2000 population report on these rare Barber birds. I agreed to serve as the coordinator for this joyful task. At the same time, I knew I must look to each and every one of our members for any available data on the subject at hand. The plan Steve and I had was simple: after gathering all available information from both inside and outside our Society, I would publish the results in a future issue of our *Journal*. Hopefully, this can be accomplished by the fall of this year.

Here are the specifics of my plan for data collection, and ways in which we can work together:

- Owner-members: if you either *own*, or are certain you know the whereabouts of any example of an 1892-O Micro O half, please let me know as much as possible about the particular specimen: its grade, color, distinguishing marks or features, whether holdered or not (specify type when known), and any available history. Because we want to protect the privacy of actual owners, the data you submit could simply state something like this: "AG piece (Full Good obverse, AG Reverse, with wear evenly into lettering (more so at 2 o'clock), *held by Maryland collector* since 1993, even original gray. Purchased from Dave Lawrence Rare Coins for \$375 (price data can be optional, but may be interesting from an historical point of view)."
- Dealers: I will contact dealers known to have major Barber inventories, like Dave Lawrence, Bower & Merena, Wayne Freese, Jack Beymer, L&C Coins, and Bob Weikle, as well as a number of other dealers like Larry Briggs who have smaller Barber holdings but a wealth of knowledge. The hope here is to not only locate possible pieces currently held in dealers' inventory, but tap their collective memory for any pieces they handled in the last several years.
- Books & auction catalogs: our membership definitely has immediate access to many books and auction catalogs. These can be invaluable in our search, both in documenting the survivors and perhaps tracking down their current whereabouts. For example, the Eliasberg specimen, handled by Bowers & Merena a few years ago, was sold raw, but was quickly placed in a PCGS (I believe) 67 holder, and is the finest known. Anyone know where it is today?

Barber Rarity

Continued from page 7

- Price lists: let's all keep our eyes peeled! I see several dealer price lists every month, but there are certainly scores I don't. If you spot a UMO (Unidentified Micro O), let me know. Again, I can do the detective work; I just need to be put on track. For instance, Iowa dealer Brian Greer is currently offering a PCGS VG-8 Micro O for \$3,450. There may be a few more out there, and this type of data is extremely important for our year 2000 population report.

As Steve Sczerbiak stated in the Winter BCCS issue, "We are the holders of the vast majority of Barber coinage." As true as that statement must be, our membership must also be the single greatest repository of Barber *knowledge* today. If so, we can certainly shed more light on the extant population of the elusive Micro O. Please join me in this small but important quest for greater knowledge of one of the great Barber treasures. Let's beat the numismatic bushes and see what we can flush out. Our discoveries will surely enrich us all.

Information may be sent to me at: Michael Flanagan, 17 Green Acres Avenue, West Hartford CT 06107, (860) 521-7814 (evenings), or by e-mail at mpflanagan@aol.com.

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Starting A Barber Half Collection

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By Russell Easterbrooks

Collectors aspiring to assemble a collection of Barber half dollars are fortunate that today's market holds countless opportunities within this series.

Determining the degree of circulation that retains your interest with this design will be your first consideration. Barber halves are most commonly found grading G to VG, and saw hard use in circulation.

Personally, I dislike the mintstate grades. These coins were denied the dignity of circulation for which coins were intended. The mintstate grading entanglements, and their "pricey nature" are also discouraging. If perfection is what you seek, proof coins are the way to go. The added price of proof coins is quickly offset by their limited mintage figures.

In today's market I would consider a nicely matched collection of VF Barber halves. While the middle grades, F to XF will prove to be challenging to locate regardless of mintage figures, prices are reasonable and present an excellent value.

Dave Lawrence's *"Complete Guide to Barber Halves"* should be considered an essential part of your collection. Remember coin collecting is a never ending educational endeavor. Many other coin related books which touch upon Barber coins will prove helpful as you assemble your collection.

As you examine the mintage figures and availability of Barber halves, you will quickly realize that there are many "sleeper" dates in this series. Then there is the ultimate prize, the 1892 micro-O (notice Michael Flanagan's article in this *Journal*).

Of the three Barber denominations, the half dollars appear to display the least number of die errors. Considering the size of the half dollar and the likelihood of die cracks and other minor errors, this may seem unusual. However, it is important to remember that the bulk of Barber halves available today grade G to VG. This significant amount of wear would most certainly eliminate all but the most major die errors. It's also important to note that the melting pot devoured a great number of Barber halves further limiting the discovery of die errors.

The following pages display a number of interesting photos of Barber halves with various die cracks. Special thanks to Steven Jones, and David Lange for submitting them to the *Journal*.



*Die Break in Letters
1900-S Half
Photos Courtesy Steven Jones*



*Die Breaks at Bust and In Stars
1900-S Half
Photos Courtesy Steven Jones*

“Uncle Frank”

.

My mother said that her uncle was born in Herkimer (New York) in 1901 — his girlfriend, Mabel, told me that he was born in Ft. Plain in 1905. To me it didn't matter when he was born because politically he stood to the “far right” of Ghengis Khan, Atilla the Hun, and Diocletian. He was as flexible as a “drive-by” shooting and he “kicked” you know what: before, during, and after lunch!

Frank had spent thirty-three (33) years in the Army and he retired as a “command master sergeant.” To us kids, he was the “babysitter” who NEVER took any prisoners. You did NOT want to get on his bad side because he would personally see to it that you got: reamed, steamed, and dry-cleaned for your particular transgression. My sister said that he looked, “...as old as dirt...” That became our nickname for him – “Dirt.” – and I say this now out of respect for him. I was eleven (11) and Maggie was nine (9).

I met my grand-uncle at one of the small marinas that was located near the Thousand Island area of upstate New York — the biggest city in the vicinity was Watertown in case one of our members is looking at a New York state map. When it came to fishing, Uncle Frank had few, if any, equals. If anyone belonged in the Fishing Hall of Fame (in Dania, Florida), my mom's uncle did.

“Dirt” kept a small, blue, Maxwell House coffee can (from the 30s or 40s) on the counter behind the cash register. I didn't know what was in it, but I was determined to ask and find out. I was told in no uncertain terms that I was to leave it alone or I would get “...a shot in the A double S...” I wanted to use unconventional warfare and pull a “Commando Raid” on the marina at night, but I valued my life — I knew that I would probably get punished if I got caught!

The “fickle finger of fate” intervened and I grew-up. When I got back from Laos in 1974, I saw uncle Frank one more time. Mabel had told me to be careful because he looked as if he had, “...ran through a screen door and made it...” I could see for myself that he was much older now, but still able to play poker and make “last call” at the local V.F.W. We talked about the “old days” for a few hours over a bottle of Old Bushmills — I NEVER saw Frank or talked with him again.

Some years later, I got a Christmas card from Mabel — she asked me to drop by because she wanted to see me again. She told me that she had something to give me — I was NOT surprised because, even in old age, she was a sharp as a tak. She mentioned that Frank and she had NEVER gotten married for one reason or another —mostly because her son was against it.

When I went to visit her at her home, I could plainly see her 1956 Buick Road-Master out in front — Mabel continued to drive well into her 80s. Uncle Frank had driven a 1949 Hudson Hornet for more than twenty-five years, but it

“Uncle Frank”

Continued from page 12

was apparently “long gone.” I didn’t know what I was going to ascertain as it related to Mabel, but I was up for almost anything at this point.

At long last — she presented me with the old, blue, Maxwell House coffee can that Frank had owned since God was boy and Jesus wore “short pants.” What was in that can? Believe it or not — one or two special items: one 1908-S Indian Head cent in V.G., one 1901-S Dime in G (04), and one 1896-S quarter in AG (03) lightly cleaned — all the rest were common date Indian head pennies, Mercury dimes, S.L. quarters and a few Walkers and Barber Halves — maybe 50.00 dollars in change overall. Mabel gave it all to me because she said that Frank wanted me to have it because I was the only one who had ever asked about it.

Uncle Frank once told me that, “...no good turn goes unpunished..” I felt that he was in the immediate area and that he was enjoying himself wherever he was. I still have the 1896-S quarter in my safe deposit box. I am trying to “recolor” by using some old-fashioned techniques; it would probably wholesale for about \$95.00 to \$100.00.

My Uncle Frank had a brother named Raymond, but that’s a story I’ll leave for another time.

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A Jackpot of Quarters

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By Jack White

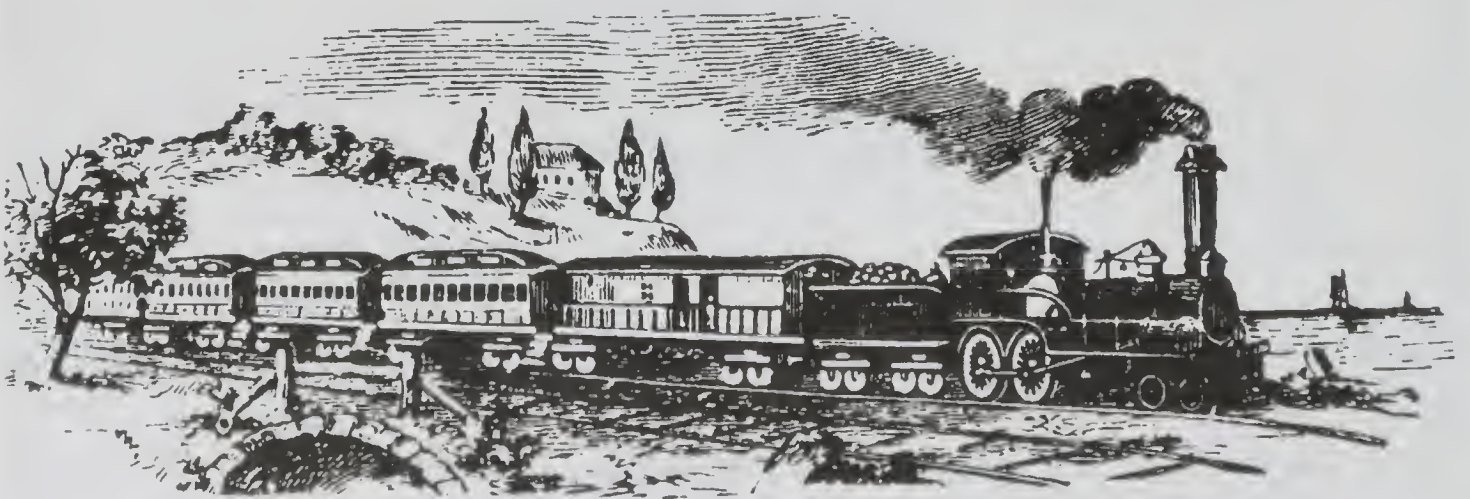
The immense popularity of the state quarters program has in the past year, brought new interest in the older quarter series. This is quite evident in the dramatic price increases of the earlier Washington coins, particularly the silver issues. This popularity has extended further back to include our beloved Barber design as well. During the past couple of months, I have seen more available semi-key and key date Barber quarters in the marketplace than at any other time in the past ten years.

My collecting pursuits seems to be focused on quarters lately. I have been lucky enough to acquire large quantities of four of the first six state quarters simply by doing a little legwork. I was very fortunate in acquiring an extremely rare variety just recently, a Liberty seated quarter at a small local show. Amongst this jackpot of quarters has been an accumulation of numerous semi-key Barbers.

I was able to view and later purchase a couple of coins from a nice high grade set of circulated Barber quarters, mostly in XF to AU grades. I bought a choice XF 1898-O, by far the best circulated coin of this date I've ever seen. The other coin was an XF 1912-S. Each of these coins are seldom found in VF or better.

At two shows I've acquired approximately twenty, F to VF Barber quarters, none of which were common dates. When I can purchase three of these type of coins at a show, I feel like I had a nice show.

The three key quarters, the 1896-S, 1901-S, and 1913-S also have appeared in numbers which I rarely encounter. I purchased a G/AG 1896-S and have seen a handful of others. I've crossed paths with four 1901-S quarters, all in AG. This key of keys is rarely seen in full G or better. Lastly, low grade 1913-S quarters have gone up in price, as well as frequency of appearance. I saw the finest circulated example of my life grade by ANACS VF-30. This was the lone 1913-S I've had the good fortune to see in any grade between F and MS-63. A rare coin indeed.



1999

By Michael Mitchell

1999 was a very interesting and educational year. I live in a very small town in southwestern Colorado and as far as coins go, action would not be the word I would use. My neighbor knew I was a coin collector and asked me one day if I would like to look at some big pennies he had. He brought over almost a complete date set of large cents minus about four dates. All the coins were in a blue bag. This bag also contained about 25 half cents, a VF 1799 dollar and a XF 40 1786 New Jersey Copper with a wide shield. I was in shock to say the least, but I looked them over as best I could. I am not an early copper expert, but I learned quickly. He was not a collector and had gotten them from his father; my neighbor is currently 83 years old. I went to my neighbor's house and we agreed on a price. My wife and I had a maximum I could pay for the coins. (Money is kind of tight in my house, got to talk to the boss first.)

Now that I had the coins I had to find out more about Large Cents. To the book store I went, Breen's *Complete Encyclopedia of US and Colonial Coins*, and *Penny Whimsy* were books every numismatic library should have and it only took me ten years to get them.

I had to sell most of the coins to get my (our) money back. I did make some money, bought some great books and kept a couple of nice coins. (A VF 1804 half cent and a XF 1823 Half Cent) There was not one Barber coin in the lot. Making money and getting coins is a good thing, but the best thing I learned is that books and the information you get out of them will last a lifetime. I now know more about and have a greater appreciation for early copper than I ever thought I would.

I sold most of the coins to the Coin/Comic Book/Baseball Card dealer in a little town down the road. I thought I would try my luck at the auction game with the nicer coins. It was a learning experience to say the least. The 1793 Wreath Cent did get its picture in the auction catalog, I was so proud. I am still not sure on the whole auction deal, I felt like I was kind of left out of the loop. It was my first time so maybe I expected too much. The prices the coins sold for were fine, it was just the rest of the stuff.

Now I thought I'd go out and get a nice Barber Quarter, 1911-D is one that I wanted for quite a while. I did find a nice F+ that I did pick up. It is a very nice original coin with a nice strike. I should have shopped around more for the quarter because I did over pay a bit, live and learn. At our local Gun, Knife & Coin Show I found an 1893 S/S dime #101 grading G4 price \$5.50.

It was still a pretty good year on the numismatic front, I never would have thought all this could have happened in a little town like mine.

More on Liberty Nickels

By Paul Reuter

I have written several *Journal* articles about Liberty nickels and after a brief review of them, I have a few more thoughts to add. First of all these are really Barber coins as Charles Barber did design them. I find the design to be particularly attractive because it is so clean and uncluttered. Also the coins seem to tone so nicely which further adds to their appearance.

This is a short series and it can be completed fairly rapidly. For some reason, in mint state the most common condition advertised seems to be MS63 or MS64. The prices shown in ads are easily subject to discounts and considering the number of coins struck, there are plenty of MS coins available. The prices compare favorably to Barber dimes in similar mint state and of similar mintages. Checking back through old Red Books, the nickels have moved up in price at about the same rate as other Barbers. So, all in all this would be a nice series to collect in any grade and a nice sideline while you overcome lulls in collecting the other series.

For anyone with more than a passing interest in Liberty nickels I recommend that they purchase *Treasure Hunting Liberty Nickels*, a book by Kenin Flynn and Bill Van Note. The authors give a nice background on the coins and an extensive discussion of errors. Besides discussing the types of errors that can be found, they tell how the errors occur in the first place.

In the error section, they picture a surprising number of repunched dates and all sorts of doubling. For instance in the case of the 1908 Liberty nickel they list and show photographs of three different misplaced date varieties and eight different replaced date varieties. The photographs are 60x and they make it easy to see the varieties, much easier than it is to see the varieties on one's own coins when using a lower magnification. An added feature is the listing of eight kinds of doubling and a discussion on doubling that would apply to any series of coins. They also include estimated values for the varieties in various mint states.

The book may be purchased from Stanton Printing and Publishing, Savannah, Ga, 800-828-8306.

BCCS ADVERTISEMENT RATES				
1/8 page	1 issue	\$12	4 issues..... \$40	
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